

women are physically assaulted or raped by their partners every year.

Women who suffer from violence depend on local services and health care providers to help them through their physical and emotional pain. Nationally battered women's shelters serve more than 300,000 women and their families, even though there is a far greater number who seek this assistance. These shelters and health care services are critical for women, victims of violence.

In the year 2000, the Violence Against Women Act mandated that the Attorney General conduct a national study of discrimination against domestic violence victims when they try to sign up for health insurance. This report would offer new insight into better ways that our Nation can serve domestic violence victims and help us understand the many struggles that women victims face day-to-day. This report, by the way, was due back in October of 2001 and here it is now, June of 2004. Where is the report?

I would also like to bring attention to the fact that the administration's healthy marriage proposal for the welfare reauthorization bill failed to include important protections for battered women in marriage protection programs.

In addition, \$1.8 billion in Federal and State funds that were allocated for these healthy marriage programs targeted at low income couples would come out of funds already squeezed from child care, job training, and transportation services. These services are especially critical for low income women.

But this is not the first time low income women's rights have been targeted by this administration. The new reports by women advocates also clearly demonstrate how the Bush administration's tax policy failed women in order to pay for tax cuts for the very wealthy.

The administration's budget proposes over \$191 billion in new tax cuts over the next 5 years, primarily for the benefit of the wealthiest in our country. These benefits for the rich come at the mercy of deep cuts in domestic programs.

Just look at the cuts in housing, for example. Affordable housing is essential to ensuring that women have equal opportunity in our society and have stable homes in which to raise their children. Currently 28 percent of women-headed families have critical housing problems. Yet because of the Bush administration's policy, next year 250,000 families, most of whom are headed by women raising children, will lose important housing vouchers. Within 5 years, 800,000 families could lose their housing vouchers.

We also cannot forget that the administration excluded millions of low income working families from the increase in the child tax credit of 2003. Over 7 million families with incomes between \$10,500 and \$26,500 were denied

in the 2003 increase in the child tax credit signed by President Bush. Two-thirds of those parents were hurt by this exclusion, in particular, women, disproportionately single mothers, women of color, and married women who were out of work.

It is clear that the Bush administration does not enforce policies that help women make economic strides. Women deserve better treatment by this administration. After all, we represent well over 50 percent of the population. And it is time that we stand up against these policies and politics that are eroding our rights as women.

DEGRADATION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker and distinguished Members of Congress present, I come before you to celebrate the millions of working American women who are blazing a bright path for young women to successfully contribute to the American economy and, most importantly, to the future of our Nation. Women are the backbone of America's homes and of America's economy. Our presence and career fields such as science, business, and politics, has only brought improvement to these areas where women have traditionally been underrepresented.

Though women have made tremendous gains in closing the gender gap in the workplace in the past, the current status of women in the workplace has become stagnant and on a decline.

Instead of full and equal pay, women are still hitting the glass ceiling. In the year 2002, data from the AFL/CIO stated that women are paid 77 cents for every dollar men received.

□ 1845

Of course, before that it was 76. Nationwide, working families lose \$200 billion of income annually to the wage gap. In addition to loss of wages, working American women have experienced a loss of jobs during the last 3 years. Following the 2001 recession, women workers lost over 300,000 jobs between the start of the recession and March of 2004. The 2001 recession marked the only period of sustained job loss for women in the last 40 years in the United States.

With startling facts like these, I ask, What is this administration doing to ensure equality in the workplace for working American women? Mr. Speaker, I am sorry to report that this administration has taken regressive actions to address the problems facing women in the workplace.

The Bush administration has made 25 publications on the Department of Labor's Women's Bureau Web site unavailable. This administration has disbanded and underfunded government

offices that were established to address women, such as the Office of Women's Initiatives and Outreach in the White House and the President's Interagency Council on Women.

Mr. Speaker, these actions are really unacceptable, and Congress should lead the charge for procuring equality for women in the workplace by writing and passing bills that call for equal pay of both men and women employees for equal work, restoring the funding to government offices dedicated to women issues and reinstating the publications that have been removed from the Department of Labor's Web site regarding women in the workplace.

In the future, the majority of the workplace will continue to be female. What is this saying to our young people?

The Bush administration prides itself on being a champion of the economy and an administration that has taken action to stimulate our economy with tax cuts. However, this administration has failed to include women in this process for stimulating the economy. Women are 51 percent of the population in our country and growing, and over half of the working population is not being utilized to contribute to the growth of the American economy.

I urge my colleagues to take a stand against the degradation of the status of women in the workplace of this Bush administration.

EXCHANGE OF SPECIAL ORDER TIME

Mr. STRICKLAND. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to claim the time that the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE).

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. GERLACH). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Ohio?

There was no objection.

EX-PRISONERS OF WAR NOT RECEIVING JUST COMPENSATION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. STRICKLAND) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. STRICKLAND. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to talk about yet one more example of how the Bush administration seems to put the needs of Iraq and Iraqis over the needs of America and Americans.

We all know that during the first Gulf War there were a significant number of American soldiers who were taken prisoner of war. Under the law passed by this House, we have given permission for those who have been tortured to take legal action against a terrorist state that was responsible for that torture. So 17 American prisoners of war, who were prisoner during the time of Saddam Hussein's regime, brought legal action; and the courts determined that they were, in fact, entitled to just compensation and granted them compensation.

Then the Bush administration spent tax dollars to fight that decision, took it to a higher court, and had that decision overturned.

Now, these prisoners of war were not seeking money from America. They were seeking money from the Iraqi regime that had tortured them. What kind of torture did they experience? They described being tortured with electric shocks, being threatened with castration, being threatened with execution, being beaten so severely that their bones were broken and that they were permanently disabled as a result of those beatings.

This country had frozen over \$1 billion in Iraqi assets that would have been used to pay these ex-prisoners of war just compensation, but the Bush administration said this money is needed for the reconstruction of Iraq. That is more important than compensating the American POWs; and so the Bush administration has returned that money back to Iraq, and our American ex-POWs have been told that there is nothing for them.

This is even more egregious when we consider what Secretary Rumsfeld has recently said. He said that he believes the Iraqi prisoners who were tortured in the Abu Ghraib prison, the very same prison where the Americans were tortured, Secretary Rumsfeld believes that this country should, in fact, compensate them because they were tortured.

So here is what we have. American POWs having been tortured in Iraq and told by the Bush administration they are entitled to no compensation. The Iraqi prisoners were tortured in this very same prison, and our Secretary of Defense is saying American tax dollars should be used to compensate them.

One of the newspapers in my region had a story that went like this: it was the United States of America and Saddam Hussein versus American ex-POWs, and the United States and Saddam Hussein won.

The Senate had taken action. Unanimously the Senate voted last week to approve an amendment submitted by Senator REID, cosponsored by Senator WARNER and Senator LEVIN, to say that no Iraqi prisoner would be compensated for the abuse they endured unless the American POWs were compensated for the abuse that they endured. It seems to me that if we are going to use resources to compensate the Iraqi prisoners, that the American POWs are entitled to at least similar compensation; and I hope that my colleagues from both sides of the aisle will recognize the injustice of compensating the Iraqi prisoners while we fight the compensation for American prisoners of war.

So during the next weeks and months, I am going to be looking for ways to attach this language to a piece of legislation that will guarantee this fairness and will correct this unjust situation.

WHAT IS THE EXIT STRATEGY FROM IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, just a few hours ago, this House engaged in a debate, one I believe that is one of the more important debates that we have in this House, and that is, the appropriations for the defense of this Nation. Clearly, there were so many themes and so many issues that go yet unanswered. I think it is important to elaborate for the American people some of the concerns that needed to be addressed but were not addressed in the fullness of the debate that took place.

I acknowledged when I was on the floor that I respected and appreciated the hard work of the chairman of the full committee, the ranking member of the full committee, as well as the ranking member of the subcommittee and certainly the chairman of the subcommittee.

I also have noted in the past my full commitment for our troops on the frontline and have had the pleasure of interacting with them in my visits to them in Afghanistan, more than once, in Iraq and other places in the Mideast, and will continue to interact with them as my other colleagues do; and I continue to indicate that my door remains open to their concerns and their family members.

That is why I rise today, because when the administration announced a \$25 billion supplemental that is necessary for Afghanistan and Iraq, I made the point that I would like to see some strategy, some long-term exit strategy, some way and means of bringing our troops home, some understanding of how many troops we will need, do we have enough troops; and yet in the course of the designing of this appropriations bill, outside of the process of those committees, there has been no known process that I have or known statement to the actual road map that we are going to take out of Iraq and Afghanistan.

There is a due date of June 30 for the transition of power. I frankly believe in al Qaeda assessing the situation that we actually need to have, if you will, a greater understanding as to whether that transition of power will truly work. We do not have that, but yet we have been asked to give \$25 billion, \$25 billion in order for those dollars to go to Iraq and Afghanistan.

I stand here in full support of increased military personnel pay, of support for families and children of the military personnel, of veterans, in support of an increase in their salaries; and, in fact, Mr. Speaker, I had an amendment that would offer \$100 million taken from the missile defense dollars that cost \$20 billion to train, equip and provide related assistance to the military security forces.

Had that amendment been accepted, I might have voted for this appropriation; but the reason why I think this point was extremely important, and again, this may have been something that was discussed in the midst of the committee process, but it was not brought to this body, not in a full debate, and that is, in my visits I spoke to Reservists and National Guard who indicated, I was trained as a cook, trained as a carpenter, trained as a driver, and yet I was being utilized as an MP; I have been utilized as a prison guard for Abu Ghraib, for example. In many instances, because of the short-changing of personnel, we have seen those ill-equipped to be in the midst of combat or to be used or be involved or engaged in combat action, not defense action, not meaning I am doing something else and I am being attacked, but to go out offensively and be part of combat.

We are seeing those individuals untrained doing those duties. We have seen tragedies occur. Certainly, we saw the tragedies of soldiers being kidnapped on convoys. We see the tragedies of MPs not really being trained as MPs; and certainly, there is no greater tragedy for the American personnel and for the Iraqis of Abu Ghraib.

So this amendment was to be offered, and unfortunately, because of the unfortunate restraints, or the restraints that we have, that amendment was not accepted.

I would have also offered an amendment to deal specifically with contracting companies because we realize that we had a problem with outside contractors, though many have done very able work; but I believe that if you are a contractor wearing the flag of the United States of America, engaged with the United States military, you must have an impeccable record; and if by chance you have been charged with human rights violations in the last 5 years or beyond, then I would argue that you have no place in having a contract in the United States Government, but particularly in areas of conflict; and I would have offered that amendment had it been received and accepted.

Let me also say that there are two other crises that I think are extremely important. The first one goes back to military personnel. That has to do, Mr. Speaker, with mental health; and I would have offered an amendment on mental health as well as additional resources for the Sudan.

Let me close by saying that all of this would have warranted a better bill, and maybe we would have had a chance to address the needs of women in America, which I would have spoken about or will endeavor to speak about at some other time. In any event, I will submit many of my comments for the RECORD.